CLAIMS

1. A method for indexing files in a data storage system of a computer system having means for reading and writing data from the data storage system, displaying information, and accepting user input, wherein each file located on the data storage system has a file name, the method comprising the steps of:

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(a) defining in the computer system a list of at least one category description;

(b) accepting user input associating with a file at least one category description from the list of at least one category description;

(c) storing in the data storage system a file record containing at least the

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file name, file location information, and the associated category descriptions for the file.

2.   A method for accessing files in a data storage system of a computer system having means for reading and writing data from the data storage system, displaying information, and accepting user input, wherein each file located on the data storage system has a file name, and stored in the data storage

5   system are file records, one for each selected file, comprising at least the file name, file location information, and at least one associated category description for the selected file, each such category description being selected from a defined list of at least one category description, the method comprising the steps of:

10   (a)   displaying the defined list of at least one category description;

    (b)   accepting user input defining a search filter of at least one category description selected from the defined list of at least one category description;

    (c)   disabling in the computer system selection of all category descriptions

15   in the displayed list of at least one category description that would not provide a logical match to the defined search filter.

3.   A method for accessing files in a data storage system of a computer system having means for reading and writing data from the data storage system, displaying information, and accepting user input, wherein each file located on the data storage system has a file name, and stored in the data storage

5   system are file records, one for each selected file, comprising at least the file name, file location information, and at least one associated category description for the selected file, each such category description being selected from a defined list of at least one category description, the method comprising the steps of:

10   (a)   displaying the defined list of at least one category description;

(b)   accepting user input defining a search filter of at least one category description selected from the defined list of at least one category description;

(c)   searching in the computer system the category descriptions of each

15   stored file record for a logical match to the at least one category description of the defined search filter;

(d)   displaying the file name of all file records having category descriptions that logically match the at least one category description of the defined search filter.

4.   A method for accessing files in a data storage system of a computer system having means for reading and writing data from the data storage system, displaying information, and accepting user input, wherein each file located on the data storage system has a file name, the method comprising the steps of:

5   (a)   defining in the computer system a list of at least one category description;

        (b)   accepting user input associating with a file at least one category description from the list of at least one category description;

        (c)   storing in the data storage system a file record containing at least the
10   file name, file location information, and the associated category descriptions for the file;

        (d)   displaying the defined list of at least one category description;

        (e)   accepting user input defining a search filter of at least one category description selected from the defined list of at least one category de-
15   scription;

        (f)   searching in the computer system the category descriptions of each stored file record for a logical match to the at least one category description of the defined search filter;

        (g)   displaying the file name of all file records having category descriptions
20   that logically match the at least one category description of the defined search filter.

5. The method for accessing files of claims 3 or 4, further including the step of:

(a)   disabling in the computer system selection of all category descriptions in the displayed list of at least one category description that would not provide a logical match to the defined search filter.

6. The method for accessing files of claims 3 or 4, further including the steps of:

(a)   accepting user input selecting at least one file from the displayed file names;

(b)   accessing the at least one selected file on the data storage system using the file location information from the file record associated with the at least one selected file.

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7.   A method for accessing files in a data storage system of a computer system having means for reading and writing data from the data storage system, displaying information, and accepting user input, the method comprising the steps of:

(a)   creating in the computer system a category table containing at least one category;

(b)   creating in the computer system a file information directory comprising at least one entry corresponding to one file on the data storage system, each entry comprising at least a unique file identifier for the corresponding file, and a countable set of categories selected from the category table; and

(c)   creating in the computer system a search filter comprising a countable set of file identifiers, wherein for each file identifier in the search filter there is at least one entry in the file information directory having a countable set of categories matching the countable set of categories of the search filter.

8.   A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 7, wherein each category comprises a user defined category name and a unique category identifier created by the computer system.

9.   A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 8, wherein each category further comprises a category type designation.

10. A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 8, wherein the step of creating a category table comprises the steps of:

    (1) accepting user input defining a new category;

    (2) displaying the new category;

5   (3) creating a unique category identifier associated with the new category; and

    (4) storing the new category name and unique category identifier in the category table.

11. A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 10, wherein the step of creating a file information directory comprises the steps of:

    (1) accepting user input selecting a file;

    (2) displaying each category in the category table;

5   (3) accepting user input associating the selected file with at least one category selected by the user from the displayed categories;

    (4) creating a new entry in the file information directory;

    (5) storing in the new entry the file identifier of the selected file; and

10   (6) storing in the new entry the category identifier of each of the selected categories.

12. A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 11, wherein the data storage system further includes a file name for each file and the step of selecting a file comprises the steps of:

    (1)   displaying at least one file name; and

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    (2)   accepting a user selection of a file from the displayed file names.

13. A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 7, wherein the step of creating a search filter comprises the steps of:

    (1)   disabling categories which if added to the search filter would not match the categories of at least one entry in the file information directory;

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    (2)   accepting user input selecting at least one category as a component of the search filter.

14. A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 13, wherein disabled categories are indicated by means of a unique display attribute.

15. A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 13, wherein each category comprises a user defined category name and a unique category identifier created by the computer system, and further including the step of displaying the name of each file in the file information directory having

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category identifiers matching to the category identifiers of the categories in the search filter.

16. A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 15, further comprising the step of opening a file corresponding to a selected one of the displayed file names.

17. A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 16, wherein the step of opening a file comprises the steps of:

    (1)   accepting user input selecting a file from the displayed file names; and

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    (2)   opening the selected file.

18. A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 16 wherein the step of opening a file comprises the steps of:

    (1)   testing if only file name is displayed, and if so, then opening the file corresponding to that file name.

19. A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 13, wherein the step of creating a search filter further comprises the steps of:

    (1)   relating at least two selected categories with logical operations.

20. A method for accessing files in accordance with Claim 13, wherein the data storage system includes the time of creation of each file, and the step of creating a search filter further comprises the steps of:

    (1)   accepting user input selecting a time range to limit matching to

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        only those entries in the file information directory having creation times in the selected time range.

21. A system for indexing files in a data storage system of a computer system having means for reading and writing data from the data storage system, displaying information, and accepting user input, wherein each file located on the data storage system has a file name, the system comprising:

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(a)   means for defining in the computer system a list of at least one category description;

(b)   means for accepting user input associating with a file at least one category description from the list of at least one category description;

(c)   means for storing in the data storage system a file record containing

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at least the file name, file location information, and the associated category descriptions for the file.

22.   A system for accessing files in a data storage system of a computer system having means for reading and writing data from the data storage system, displaying information, and accepting user input, wherein each file located on the data storage system has a file name, and stored in the data storage system are file records, one for each selected file, comprising at least the file name, file location information, and at least one associated category description for the selected file, each such category description being selected from a defined list of at least one category description, the system comprising:

(a)   means for displaying the defined list of at least one category description;

(b)   means for accepting user input defining a search filter of at least one category description selected from the defined list of at least one category description;

(c)   means for disabling in the computer system selection of all category descriptions in the displayed list of at least one category description that would not provide a logical match to the defined search filter.

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23. A system for accessing files in a data storage system of a computer system having means for reading and writing data from the data storage system, displaying information, and accepting user input, wherein each file located on the data storage system has a file name, and stored in the data storage

5 system are file records, one for each selected file, comprising at least the file name, file location information, and at least one associated category description for the selected file, each such category description being selected from a defined list of at least one category description, the system comprising:

(a) means for displaying the defined list of at least one category descrip-
10 tion;

(b) means for accepting user input defining a search filter of at least one category description selected from the defined list of at least one category description;

(c) means for searching in the computer system the category descriptions
15 of each stored file record for a logical match to the at least one category description of the defined search filter;

(d) means for displaying the file name of all file records having category descriptions that logically match the at least one category description of the defined search filter.

24. A system for accessing files in a data storage system of a computer system having means for reading and writing data from the data storage system, displaying information, and accepting user input, wherein each file located on the data storage system has a file name, the system comprising:

5   (a)   means for defining in the computer system a list of at least one category description;

   (b)   means for accepting user input associating with a file at least one category description from the list of at least one category description;

   (c)   means for storing in the data storage system a file record containing

10   at least the file name, file location information, and the associated category descriptions for the file;

   (d)   means for displaying the defined list of at least one category description;

   (e)   means for accepting user input defining a search filter of at least one

15   category description selected from the defined list of at least one category description;

   (f)   means for searching in the computer system the category descriptions of each stored file record for a logical match to the at least one category description of the defined search filter;

20   (g)   means for displaying the file name of all file records having category descriptions that logically match the at least one category description of the defined search filter.

25. The system for accessing files of claims 23 or 24, further including:

    (a)   means for disabling in the computer system selection of all category descriptions in the displayed list of at least one category description that would not provide a logical match to the defined search filter.

26. The system for accessing files of claims 23 or 24, further including:

    (a)   means for accepting user input selecting at least one file from the displayed file names;

    (b)   means for accessing the at least one selected file on the data storage system using the file location information from the file record associated with the at least one selected file.

27.   A system for accessing files in a data storage system comprising:

(a)   a plurality of files in a data storage system;

(b)   a plurality of user-defined categories; and

(c)   file association means for associating at least one file with at least one

5   category selected from the plurality of user-defined categories.

28.   A system for accessing files in a data storage system as set forth in claim 27, further including category addition means for adding one or more additional categories to the plurality of user-defined categories.

29.   A system for accessing files in a data storage system as set forth in claim 27, further including category linking means for linking at least one linking category to at least one linked category, such that if a specific file is associated with a linking category, the user must also associate that specific file with

5   at least one of the linked categories corresponding to the linking category.

30.   A system for accessing files in a data storage system as set forth in claim 29, further including linking reminder activated upon associating a specific file with a linking category, such that the linking reminder provides an indication to the user that the user must associate that file with at least one of the linked

5   categories corresponding to the linking category.

31.   A system for accessing files in a data storage system as set forth in claim 27, further including password-controlled file encryption means for encrypting at least one of the plurality of files, such that if a specific file is encrypted, associating that file with a category requires provision by the user of a

5   password, and any access to that file requires provision by the user of a password.